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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet outlines the educational philosophy behind foreign language instruction in the elementary school (FLES) and organizational procedures for the establishment of such programs. Major sections explain: (1) the nature of FLES, (2) program planning, (3) student eligibility, (4) teacher preparation, and (5) program articulation. A chart of a model 10-year FLES program is included. (RL)

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Principles and Policies

Foreign Languages In Oregon Elementary Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Principles and Policies for Foreign Languages in Oregon Elementary Schools

FOREWORD

The number of school districts offering foreign language instruction at the elementary school level, known as FLES programs, is growing nationally. In Oregon the national trend is clearly reflected; programs are found in all parts of the state and in all sizes of schools. In some districts the programs are well organized, offering an articulated sequence of language instruction through elementary, junior, and senior high school. In others, the programs appear to be ill-conceived in content and method and to offer questionable exposure to a language for limited periods of time.

Because of the disparity in types of programs being initiated in Oregon, a need has been expressed for an official statement of guiding principles and desirable policies to assist school administrators in determining the need for and nature of foreign language programs in Oregon elementary schools. The policies set forth in this publication were prepared by a special committee within the State Department of Education representing the elementary, instructional services, curriculum, and certification sections under the chairmanship of Dr. Paul M. Arriola, Consultant in Modern Foreign Languages.

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Superintendent of Public Instruction

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NATURE OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

There is a sharp distinction between a formal language program and an enrichment program in which a few lexical items, phrases, songs, and games are taught, perhaps in conjunction with a social studies unit. As an exploratory experience, an introduction to language through enrichment is probably of some value. Such enrichment programs, however, do not constitute adequate foreign language programs.

Many uninformed enthusiasts for language study have succumbed to the fantasy that simply because a teacher with no knowledge of a language has been able, with the aid of a book and a record, to teach a few phrases, he can go on doing more of the same until the children acquire mastery. This notion is a complete fallacy; if this method is used persistently it results in boredom and failure. Worse yet, it will bring undeserved discredit on responsible FLES[1] programs.

In spite of convincing neurological, linguistic, and anecdotal evidence that a child below the age of twelve years learns a foreign language with much less effort than is required in later life, it must be admitted that foreign language instruction in elementary schools remains an experiment. Much supporting evidence has been obtained, but experimental findings are not yet absolutely conclusive. There is every hope for success, but success will not come if uninformed amateurs rush into ill-conceived programs. A properly conducted FLES program should give the pupil control of the organized body of a spoken and written language so that, by the time he finishes a nine- or ten-year sequence, he will be near native in his pronunciation and fluency.

PLANNING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

The district administration is responsible for obtaining teacher cooperation at all grade levels so that the program is an integrated one providing progression for the pupil as he moves through the program. Reasonable achievement goals for the various stages must be agreed upon so that a pupil going from one school to another will receive recognition for work already completed.

It is of the utmost importance that the study of a language be pursued in an unbroken sequence. A gap in the continuity of foreign language study should not be permitted. For this reason, it is better to extend the study of the language downward from the ninth to the eighth grade and from the seventh to the sixth grade than to begin

[1] Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools.

in the fourth grade and permit discontinuance before study is resumed.

Planning should involve the community as well as school personnel. A FLES program will need wide support over an extended period. It has been found that those programs have prospered in which the broadest possible dissemination of information has been made.

> **The citizenry must know what is being attempted and—even more vital—why. In the experience of many, it has been found that almost all the opposition to these programs springs from ignorance of what they really are meant to be, and for whom they are being given.[2]**

"Why", "for whom", "by whom", "when" are test questions which the school administration should ask before embarking on a FLES program. Unless satisfactory answers are forthcoming, sound educational policy dictates that it be postponed.

WHY FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

General education goals should receive first consideration when seeking an answer to this question. It is important to the future peace and stability of the world for people to understand each other. Ignorance breeds fear and fear begets hate. Knowledge of a second language will contribute to an understanding of democracy if the language is used as an avenue for the exploration of another culture and a realization that there are other ways than our own of conceiving things. Another value in language study is the insight that it gives into our mother tongue. Mastery of another language also provides contact with ideas and values of another people.

Vocational and avocational advantages are of secondary importance. However, if the choice of language helps in these areas also, so much the better.

The main justification for an early beginning of language study is that by extending the study sequence the pupil can aspire to achieving near-native control. Therefore, the language chosen should be one that pupils can reasonably hope to continue studying in junior and senior high school.

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[2] James H. Grew, *Foreign Language Discussion Pamphlet No. III*, UNESCO. Distributed by Modern Language Association.

FOR WHOM—ALL PUPILS OR SELECTED GROUPS?

Advocates of foreign language programs in elementary schools generally feel that, until the seventh grade, language should be a common experience for all children. In fact, the sequence of study (See chart on page 7.) developed by the Modern Language Association and the National Education Association suggests that "at the end of Grade 6 informed guidance should be provided by the foreign language teacher in selecting the pupils for whom further study will be profitable."[3]

In some school systems, because of limited teaching personnel or scheduling difficulties, it may be found feasible to offer a foreign language only to a selected group such as part of the pupils in an educationally able and gifted program. This approach can be the beginning of a program which can be extended later to include all children in the grades selected for participation.

BY WHOM?—TEACHER PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION

The teacher, the methods, and the materials are the foundation without which an elementary school foreign language program will founder. The teacher should have the equivalent of at least one year of college-level language training before he is allowed to participate in any way in a FLES program. Stated another way, he should have a better than average pronunciation and a good grasp of the language structure. He does not need to be able to converse rapidly but, within the limits of his vocabulary, he should be able to speak without faltering and in such a way that a native would not be offended by his accent. This is a minimum of preparation for a person teaching in the third or fourth grade of a sequence beginning in the third grade and continuing through the twelfth.

In the elementary school, teachers of foreign language beyond the fifth grade should have the equivalent of two years of college-level language study. Generally, above the sixth grade, the teacher should have at least a minor in the language. Above the ninth, he should meet the teaching norm required by Oregon secondary school standards.

It is assumed that teachers with only one year of training will continue to study until they, too, have acquired the equivalent of

[3] *Modern Foreign Languages and the Academically Talented Student,* Modern Language Association, New York, 1960, p. 44.

two years of formal study. However, it should be possible for those with only one year of training to present such graded materials as those developed for the third and fourth grades by the Modern Language Association in its *Teacher's Guide Series.*[4] It may be, too, that a teacher will have developed sufficient competence through residence or travel abroad or from bilingual family experiences. In such instances, the standards set forth here are to be used only as suggested guides.

Because individual situations may require different recommendations, an administrator should consult State Department of Education personnel regarding the total program, and especially teacher certification, before starting an elementary school foreign language program. Even teachers with majors and minors in foreign languages may not be acquainted with the newer teaching materials designed to help the teacher employ the audio-lingual method.

Anyone teaching a foreign language in an elementary school must have an Oregon teachers certificate. This may be either a regular elementary certificate or a special one-year certificate on recommendation to teach a foreign language. This type of temporary certificate may be had only when the applicant has a baccalaureate degree and meets the foreign language teaching norm or its equivalent. Thereafter, the teacher must take courses each year toward a regular certificate. It should be noted that a teacher who holds a valid regular Oregon certificate, either elementary or secondary, when currently teaching a foreign language may be issued a one-year certificate on recommendation to teach a foreign language *part time* at the other level. (See "Special Certificates" in *Oregon Rules and Regulations Governing the Certification of Teachers,* 1961-62.)

WHEN SHOULD A FLES PROGRAM BEGIN AND HOW LONG SHOULD IT CONTINUE?

"An ideal language program begins before adolescence and continues through a long sequence toward mastery."[5] At present the most specific description of such a language sequence is to be found in the publication, *Modern Foreign Languages and the Academically Talented Student.*[6] Regardless of its title, its recommendations

[4] The Educational Publishing Corporation, Darien, Connecticut, 1956. The Guides are available in French, Grades 3-4; German, Grades 3-4; and Spanish 3-5.

[5] *Modern Foreign Languages, A Counselor's Guide,* Bulletin 20, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1960, inside cover.

[6] Modern Language Association, New York, 1960, p. 40. This book is a report of a conference sponsored by the National Education Association Project on the Academically Talented Student and the Modern Language Association of America Foreign Language Program.

apply to all students. The book is a compendium of the significant pronouncements that have been made about the new approach in foreign language teaching. It is the only work that attempts to indicate course content at the various levels of an extended sequence.

It is recommended that formal language study be undertaken in the third grade and continued through the twelfth. While admitting that language instruction before the third grade may be of value, the Modern Language Association does not recommend a formal beginning until the school-age child has acquired a greater sense of language and, perhaps more important, has adjusted to the school situation. When it is not possible to provide a ten-year sequence, it is recommended that modern language study be initiated in Grade 7, thus providing a six-year sequence. A four-year sequence beginning in the ninth grade is recommended as a minimum program. Naturally neither the four- nor the six-year sequence results in language skills comparable to those developed in a ten-year sequence.

A recommended ten-year foreign language program is presented in the chart on page 7. It is well to note the following features about this program:

- About one hundred hours of completely audio-lingual experience should precede reading.
- At the sixth-grade level, pupils read for the first time material that they have already learned to say.[7] If children are in a continuous program, the teacher, at the end of the sixth grade, should indicate those pupils for whom further study would be profitable.
- In the seventh grade, students who elect a foreign language should continue with the same one. Writing is introduced in the form of copying. There may also be dictation of short, familiar passages. At this level, the language laboratory facilities may be useful for reinforcing structure drills,[8] to provide

[7] It is true that in his mother tongue the child does not usually begin to read until he is approximately six years old, so that his initial attempts to master reading follow an extended period of hearing and speaking the language. However, it should be kept in mind that a major part of the task of learning to read is adjustment to the printed symbol, largely a matter of decoding; also, that the child of six does not yet have a clear understanding of what language is. In learning a second language, after skill in reading the native tongue has been established, it would seem that not as much time would be required between introduction to speaking and introduction to reading since by the third or fourth grade when a foreign language is first encountered, the child will have attained adequate understanding of the decoding process. Therefore, it appears that reading in a foreign language might be begun earlier than indicated by this recommendation.

[8] The word "drill" as used by structural linguists implies an intellectualized repetitive practice, varying a basic structure. Usually it involves making the one possible change in a pattern. It is not unthinking rote repetition.

THE TEN-YEAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM[9]

Grade	*Class Time*	*Audio-Lingual Experience*	*Knowledge of Structure*	*Reading Experience*	*Writing Experience*
3–4–5	5 15-Min. Periods weekly	Dialogues for imitation and memorization			
6		Drills and exercises	Formal structure or pattern drills	First visual access to material learned in grades 3–4–5	
7	3 full periods weekly	Narrative selections presented orally, some old materials, some new cultural materials Dialogues and drills continue Electro-mechanical aids to reinforce and evaluate		Emphasis on reading as a skill	Copying known material at home; dictation of prepared, assigned materials
8		Dialogues and drills on basic sentences	More emphasis on structure drills	Reading aloud in imitation of the teacher; introduction of new words in the foreign language Homework reading for comprehension without translation	
9		Increased use of pictures, readings, recordings with varied voices	Teacher begins to label and summarize grammatical patterns after the drills are mastered	Glossaries in the foreign language	Students imitate native models and use simple paraphrase techniques Some written pattern drills
10	5 full periods weekly	Radio programs and films Discussion of reading and culture	Structure drills continue	Foreign language dictionary Plays and stories	More written pattern drills Varied paraphrase techniques Directed compositions, résumés, etc.
11		Everything that concerns the class is a basis for conversation	Structural knowledge now complete; structural summaries	Nonfiction, including magazines and newspapers	Written summaries of oral discussions Area-study notebooks
12	3 or 5 full periods weekly	Literary discussions		Literary materials	Brief introduction to translation

[9] *Modern Foreign Languages and the Academically Talented Student*, op. cit., p. 48.

further practice in listening and speaking, and to evaluate pupil progress.

- Some outside reading for comprehension without translation is recommended for the eighth grade.
- In the ninth grade, the teacher begins to describe, label, and summarize the grammatical patterns after the drills have been mastered. Oral work now includes discussion rather than just recounting personal experiences.
- By the tenth grade the student completes the essential elements of structure. At this point, the linguistically talented may elect a second foreign language.
- At the twelfth grade, the academically talented can prepare for the Advanced Placement Examination.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is hoped that this statement will provide a basis for discussion by teachers and administrators contemplating a FLES program. It is not intended as a blueprint for the implementation of such a program. Its purpose is to point out the problems the district administration must face and solve before involving a school system in such a responsibility. However, brief statements regarding scheduling, instructional materials, and high school credit are appropriate at this point.

- *Scheduling time for foreign language instruction in the elementary program.* In order to include foreign language instruction in an elementary school program, it is necessary to provide adequate time for it without reducing requirements for the existing program. (See page 197, *Guide for Elementary Education in Oregon, 1957.)* Inasmuch as a daily fifteen-minute period of foreign language instruction is adequate through the sixth grade, it should be feasible, as some schools have found, to secure the needed time by either lengthening the school day or reducing recesses and intermissions or the lunch period. Where existing class periods are more than ample, a slight reduction in the length of a number of such periods may provide the necessary time for foreign language instruction without curtailment of the total program.
- *Instructional materials.* There are at present no state-adopted textbooks or other instructional materials for foreign languages in the elementary school. The *Teacher's Guide Series*[4] is recommended by the Modern Language Association. Other teaching

[4] The Educational Publishing Corporation, Darien, Connecticut, 1956. The Guides are available in French, Grades 3-4; German, Grades 3-4; and Spanish 3-5.

materials are listed in *References on Foreign Languages in the Elementary School,* a publication of the U. S. Office of Education. (See Bibliography, page 11.)

- *High School Credit.* No high school credit can be granted for a foreign language taken before the ninth grade. A student may receive advanced standing in a foreign language when he enters high school if he has met the prerequisites. Also it may be desirable to include an explanatory statement on the high school transcript to provide information for college entrance, placement, and counseling purposes.

There is no desire to discourage consideration of FLES programs. However, it is preferable to postpone any attempt at foreign language instruction in an elementary school than to initiate a hastily planned or premature program that may fail. Given the proper conditions, there is every reason to expect that FLES will succeed and prove a most rewarding experience for teachers and pupils; in fact, if the United States is ever to become effectively polylingual, FLES will be the means for it.

Additional help for planning a FLES program can be obtained from the consultant on modern foreign languages and the elementary school supervisory staff of the State Department of Education, Salem.

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Thompson, Elizabeth Engle and Hamalainen, Arthur E. *Foreign Language Teaching in Elementary Schools,* National Education Association, Washington, D. C., 1958
An objective discussion of the pros and cons of FLES. This booklet and Andersson's are a must for anyone interested in this topic.

U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. *Modern Foreign Languages: A Counselor's Guide,* OE-27004
A most valuable tool for anyone called upon to give advice on foreign language study to secondary school students. Contains information on language requirements for the B.A. and the B.S. in all colleges in the United States. The bibliography provides sources of information on guidance service, tests, and vocational opportunities.

————: *Modern Foreign Languages in the Elementary School, Teaching Techniques,* OE-27007
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————: *References on Foreign Languages in the Elementary School,* OE-27008
An invaluable source of references on books, bulletins, reports, language journals, service bureaus, placement service and instructional materials for French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, and Hebrew.